

Welford and Weston Local History Society
(www.welfordandweston.org.uk)

Newsletter 66 – October 4th, 2020

**"FROM THE PILLORY TO THE PRISON CELL -
A SHORT HISTORY OF CRIMINAL SENTENCING"**

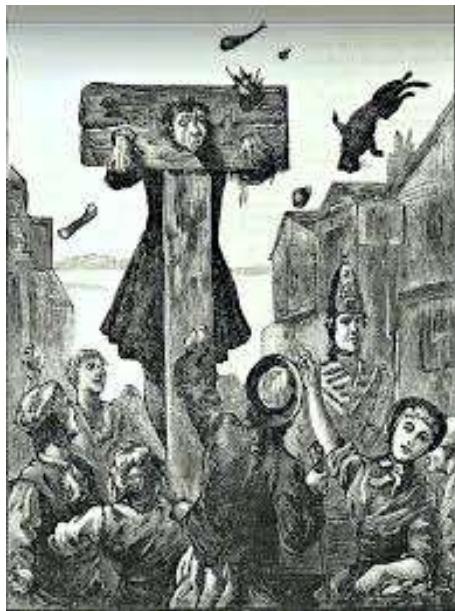
This virtual talk, via Zoom, will be given by Ginny Davis, on 30th October.

You will receive an email inviting you to join this meeting a few days before the meeting itself. This email is being sent to members who have renewed their membership, and new members who have joined recently.

At the time of writing this newsletter, I am delighted to be able to tell you that 88 of our members have renewed their membership, and 4 new people have recently joined our Society, giving a current membership of 92.

On the evening of the talk you will be able to join the meeting from 19:00. The talk itself will start at 19:30. If you are fairly new to Zoom I would encourage you to join the meeting early, so that if you experience a problem, you'll have time to call Karen Dickinson (on 07970 179821), and get it sorted out before the talk itself starts at 19:30.

If you would like the opportunity of going over the basic functions of Zoom ahead of the meeting, you should contact Karen Dickinson on the number given above or Brad Plimmer on 750716.



Benjamin Franklin is widely credited with originating the phrase ‘nothing can be certain in this life except death and taxes’ back in 1789. To this short list I would respectfully add Crime and Punishment. In February 2018 I attended a talk at the Wellesbourne Local History Group entitled ‘FROM THE PILLORY TO THE PRISON CELL’ given by Ginny Davis. Despite it being a raw winter day outside, the meeting venue was warm, welcoming and well-attended. The talk was highly entertaining and informative and many of the historical issues raised by the talk and associated questions were relevant to the UK today in respect of our current handling of crime and punishment. How should we respond to the fact, for example, that England and Wales currently imprison one of the highest proportions of their population in Western Europe and almost twice as many as Germany?

After her talk I asked Ginny if she would be prepared to talk to The Welford and Weston Local History Society and she kindly agreed to present it this year on March 27. Unfortunately we had to postpone that meeting because of the recently introduced Coronavirus lock-down. **The meeting has been rescheduled to Friday 30th October, and will be available to members of the Local History Society via Zoom.**

Criminal trials in the 17th Century were short and swift. Defendants were not allowed to give evidence and were not entitled to legal representation. Petty criminals were named and shamed with public, physical chastisement in the stocks and pillory, and with whipping. Felons were frequently hanged and by the 18th Century two hundred crimes, ranging from theft to murder, were punishable by death. The English legal system was nicknamed “The Bloody Code” and there followed a period during which the courts employed imaginative fictions and devices to avoid the death penalty being carried out. Gradually the penal system introduced other forms of sentence: transportation, hard labour, penal servitude and eventually, imprisonment.

“From The Pillory To The Prison Cell” chronicles this fascinating period of change in judicial and government treatment of criminals with reference to individual cases and examples of modern expressions which derive from the use of the death penalty. The talk is light-hearted, informative and entertaining but not for the faint-hearted. “Put your fingers in your ears” warnings are given when necessary.

Ginny Davis has an interesting and wide-ranging background. She was born in Birmingham and educated at schools in Birmingham and Malvern. She gained a first class honours degree in Law from the University of Cambridge. In 1989 she was called to the Bar and practised criminal law in the Midlands until the birth of her daughter, when she became a stay at home mother. She would not call this giving up work. She also writes and performs plays for theatre and has sold out two successive runs at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. She is a regular speaker to U3A, Probus, Luncheon Clubs and WI groups throughout the Midlands.

Ginny will present her talk on Friday, October 30th at 7.30 pm. She is a highly engaging personality and we hope that you will be able to attend.

Mike Kearsey and Brad Plimmer